

Catch Shares Task Force Status Report, July 29, 2009

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This is the third in a series of reports on the status of the NOAA Catch Shares Task Force.

The week of July 20th, NOAA Task Force participant Samuel Pooley presented the objectives of the Task Force to the Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council as well as to its Scientific and Statistical Committee. This was the last in a series of introductory presentations made by NOAA to the eight Regional Councils. All Councils have now been briefed on the goals of the Task Force and encouraged to submit comments or questions. A second round of Council briefings by NOAA Task Force participants is being planned once the draft/interim catch shares policy is released for public comment. These Councils visits will be one of several ways that NOAA will solicit public feedback on the draft/interim policy.

Last week we also held three public briefings to update interested stakeholders and representatives about the progress of the Task Force and listen to their perspectives on catch shares. Task Force participants were also invited to call in and listen to the conversation. The first briefing took place on July 20th with representatives from the commercial sector. The meeting included a range of statements and questions on catch shares allocation, participation, and transferability. The second briefing was with recreational representatives and occurred on July 22nd. While many topics were raised, the participants each saw little potential for application of catch share programs in recreational fisheries, and stated there may be negative indirect effects on recreational fisheries that stem from implementation of catch shares in mixed-use fisheries. The third briefing was with environmental organizations and was held on July 23rd. Issues raised by participants at that meeting included the need to focus on community preservation, the use of performance goals in catch share design, and the costs of catch shares and Council resource limitations. Summaries of these three briefings are posted on the Catch Shares Task Force website.

The final Task Force conference call has been scheduled for August 20th. I am pleased with our progress to date and appreciate the enthusiasm we've seen from both the Task Force participants and the public to stay engaged in this process.